

P A T T E R N S O F P O W E R

Fifty-Five Million Believers

*Soviet Central Asia and the doctrine that could not be
wrong*

*What a governing theory does when the terrain does not con-
tain the categories it requires; what it does when a measure-
ment refutes it; and why the bill is always presented to a per-
son*

1917 — 1927 — 1937

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with Claude (Anthropic)

Held as tested, not revealed.

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Preface

This is not a survey of Soviet rule in Central Asia. A full account of that exists and this paper assumes none of it. It takes one thread and follows it, and the thread is an argument about what happens to an order whose governing doctrine is held as a demonstrated law rather than as a revisable generalisation.

The argument runs like this. The Bolsheviks arrived in Turkestan with a theory that specified, in some detail, what a society contains and how it changes. The territory did not contain the things the theory specified. A doctrine that can be revised meets that situation by revising — conceding that the case is different, adjusting the sequence, writing a policy paper. A doctrine held as demonstrated cannot do this, because to concede that the world does not fit is to concede that the law was not demonstrated. So the missing categories must be produced, the contradicting measurements must be disposed of, and the failures must be attributed to something other than the theory. What they are attributed to, in every instance examined below, is a person.

The paper's evidence is deliberately narrow. It rests on four episodes: the removal of the institutional scaffolding of Islam in the 1920s; the campaign of 1927 against the veil; the destruction of the pastoral economy of the steppe around 1930; and the all-union census of January 1937. The last of these is the paper's centre, because it is the only case in this collection where a governing order built an instrument capable of testing its own central prediction, ran it, got the answer, and can be watched deciding what to do next.

Two things this paper does not argue. It does not argue that the Soviet order was uniquely cruel; it was not, and several of

the orders in this collection killed comparable numbers with less to show for it. And it does not argue that the men involved were stupid or that they did not mean what they said. The reverse is closer to the truth and is the reason the case is worth studying: they were serious, capable, often personally courageous people, they meant it, and the meaning it is a substantial part of what went wrong.

What the paper does argue is that the variable was never sincerity or competence or even cruelty. It was the relationship a governing group is able to have with its own possible error — and that this relationship is fixed not by the character of the rulers but by the *grammar* of the doctrine they rule under, which they own whether or not they believe it.

I

The four things that were missing

Marxism as it reached Tashkent was not a mood. It was a specific account of how societies are built and how they change, and it made specific claims about what a society contains.

It claimed that the motor of history is the conflict between classes defined by their relation to the means of production. It claimed that the revolutionary class in the modern epoch is the industrial proletariat. It claimed that a rural exploiting class stands between the peasant and his product, and that removing it releases him. And it claimed that religion is not an independent thing at all but a reflex — a form of consciousness thrown up by material conditions, which will dissolve of itself when the conditions producing it are removed.

Central Asia in 1918 contained none of these.

There was almost no industrial proletariat. What industry existed was cotton-ginning and rail, employed a few tens of thousands, and was staffed disproportionately by Russians — so the revolutionary class, where it existed at all, was the settler population. There was no landlord class of the European kind: land tenure ran through a mixture of endowment, water right, tribal usage and customary tenancy that did not decompose into the categories the doctrine used. Over an enormous part of the territory — the steppe — there was no settled agriculture whatever, and therefore no peasantry, no rent, no landlord and no village. And the religion was not a residue awaiting dissolution but the organising fact of the society, running the schools, the courts, the calendar, the endowments and the life-cycle of every person in it.

Four requirements of the theory, four absences on the ground.

Now hold the two possible responses side by side, because everything downstream follows from which one is available.

A doctrine held as a *generalisation from experience* meets an absence like this by narrowing its own claim. It says: this appears to be a case the generalisation does not cover, and we should find out why. The claim is weakened, the exception is recorded, the theory becomes a slightly smaller and slightly truer thing, and the cost of the whole operation is an argument in a journal.

A doctrine held as a *demonstrated law of history* cannot do this, because the law's authority rests on its being universal. If the sequence is a law and the terrain does not display it, either the law is not a law or the terrain is defective. And since the law is not in question, the terrain must be corrected.

That is the whole of what follows. The proletariat that did not exist would be designated. The peasantry that did not exist would be created out of nomads. The exploiting class that did not exist would be defined into being and filled by quota. And the religion that was supposed to dissolve, and did not, would eventually be measured — at which point the measurement would have to be destroyed.

II

What the theory said belief was

Because the fourth of those absences is where this paper's argument lives, it is worth being exact about what the doctrine actually held, in its own words, rather than in the slogan.

Marx's best-known passage on religion, from the introduction to his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, written in 1843 and published the following year, is more humane than its reputation:

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

And immediately after:

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition which requires illusions.

Read carefully, that is not contempt. It treats religion as a real response to real misery, and it locates the cure in the conditions rather than in the belief. But note the operational content, because that is what a government acts on. **Religion is an effect. Its cause is material. Remove the cause and the effect goes.** And it follows, as a corollary that the Bolsheviks drew explicitly, that where religion persists after the material conditions have been changed, the persistence must be

artificial — sustained by an interested party who profits from it. Lenin's formulation in *Socialism and Religion*, in 1905, is harder than Marx's and is the version that governed: religion as a form of spiritual oppression, a spiritual liquor in which the slaves of capital drown their human image.

So the theory generates a prediction, and the prediction is testable. Confiscate the endowments, close the courts and schools that the clergy runs, remove the material interest that sustains the priesthood, alter the conditions of life — and observance will fall away.

Set against that the account of belief this collection has been building, which makes a different prediction.

On that account a religion of the kind the Bolsheviks met is a **formation**: something installed in a person before he was able to evaluate it, by the people he was constitutively unable to distrust, at the age when the categories through which everything else will later be judged are being laid down. A formation is not a belief a person holds. It is the equipment he holds other beliefs with. It arrives with the mother's voice, the shape of the year, the words said over the dead, and the assumption — never stated, because never doubted — that this is simply how the world is arranged. It is not maintained by a clergy; the clergy is maintained by it. And because it is constitutive of the self, an attack on it is not experienced as an argument about a proposition. It is experienced as an attack on the person, and the defence of it is undertaken by the person's own household, without any institution needing to organise it.

These two accounts predict opposite things. On the first, remove the institutions and the belief withers. On the second, remove the institutions and the belief continues, because the institutions were never what was holding it — and *attacking* the belief converts it into a marker of identity, which makes it stronger.

The Soviet state ran that experiment four times in fifteen years.

III

The first test: the endowments and the courts

Through the 1920s the institutional apparatus of Central Asian Islam was dismantled, unevenly and with local variation, but comprehensively. The endowments that funded mosques, shrines and schools — the *waqf* — were nationalised, in a process that Beatrice Penati's archival work shows was driven substantially by local officials competing to demonstrate their own reliability rather than by a single directive from the centre. The Islamic courts were closed. The *maktab* and *madrasa* system, which had educated every literate person in the country for centuries out of those endowments, was abolished and replaced.

That is the theory's prescription executed exactly. The material base of the clerical interest was removed. On the doctrine's own account, what should have followed is the fading of a belief that no longer had anything holding it up.

What followed instead is the thing the record shows for the next seventy years. Observance moved into the household and the neighbourhood. Circumcision, marriage rites, burial rites, fasting and the naming of children continued, conducted by people who had no institutional standing and needed none. Unregistered mosques operated in numbers the state could not establish. Underground teaching circles ran continuously. When the state asked its own citizens in the 1980s, and again when the archives opened, what it found was a religion that had lost every institution it had in 1917 and had lost almost nothing else.

The finding is straightforward and the corpus should carry it. **An institution can be removed without the formation going with it, because the formation was never stored in the**

institution. It was installed in persons, at an age at which they could not refuse it, and it reproduces through the ordinary transmission between a parent and a child, which is not an activity a state can license.

This is the first refutation, and it was available by about 1930. It was not read as one.

IV

The second test: a class that had to be appointed

The doctrine required a revolutionary class. Central Asia did not have one. What the Soviet authorities did about that is the single clearest instance in the modern record of a governing theory generating a policy by deduction from a premise rather than by observation of a situation, and it is well documented because the reasoning was written down.

Gregory Massell's study of the episode, published in 1974, gave the resulting policy its name. Muslim women, in the Bolshevik analysis, were segregated, exploited and degraded, and were therefore the structural weak point of the traditional order — **a surrogate proletariat**. Through this potentially subversive group, on Massell's reconstruction of the reasoning, intense conflicts could be generated within the society which would lead to its disintegration and its subsequent reconstitution on new lines.

Every clause of that is deductive. It does not begin from anything Central Asian women had asked for. It begins from a theory that requires an oppressed class capable of being mobilised against the order that oppresses it, observes that the available candidates do not fit, identifies the group whose position most nearly resembles the required one, and assigns it the role.

The campaign that followed was launched on 8 March 1927 — International Women's Day — by the party's women's department. It was called the *hujum*. The word means assault.

Its opening months were, by the state's own account, a triumph. Mass meetings were held in Tashkent, Samarkand, Andijan and elsewhere; speeches were made; women pulled off the *paranji* and the horsehair *chachvon* and threw them onto bon-

fires; some marched through the streets singing. The party reported something over a hundred thousand women unveiled in Uzbekistan within months.

Then the killing started.

The women who had unveiled were murdered — and the essential fact, established in Marianne Kamp's work and in Douglas Northrop's, is who murdered them. It was not the state, and it was not, in the main, organised religious or political resistance. It was husbands, husbands' families, and neighbours. In one district, party members raped an unveiled woman, after which a hundred of the hundred and seventy women who had unveiled put the *paranji* back on. The estimate that circulates in the literature for deaths in the campaign's peak years runs to something on the order of two and a half thousand; the counting is difficult and the figure should be treated as an order of magnitude rather than a total.

The campaign faltered. Veils were bought again to replace the ones that had been burned. The state never enacted a formal ban — it could not have enforced one — while continuing to press informally for what it would not legislate. The garment's actual disappearance took another generation and came through schooling, employment and urbanisation rather than through the assault.

Two findings come out of this and the second is the one that matters.

The first is portable and the companion study to this one states it well: **attacking a formation converts it from custom into flag.** Before 1927 the *paranji* was a garment worn in some parts of Central Asia and not others, by settled townswomen and not by herders, as one item in a dense customary order — the kind of practice that changes slowly and without anybody announcing anything. After 1927 it was a national emblem, and the resistance to unveiling was carried out by a population that had no state, no army and no organisation, at the cost of its own women's lives. A practice becomes a marker of identity at

the moment a foreign power makes abandoning it the test of loyalty.

The second is the one this paper is about. **The theory predicted that the veil was an instrument of an interested class, and that removing the coercion would free the woman.** What the campaign discovered is that the practice was not held by coercion in the sense the theory meant. It was held by a formation, and a formation supplies its own enforcement — inside the household, by people who love the person they are enforcing against, at no cost to any institution and with no organisation required. The state removed what it took to be the coercion and found that the coercion multiplied, because it had never been located where the theory said it was.

That is a refutation of the doctrine's account of belief, delivered in the most direct form imaginable and paid for in women's lives.

It was not read as one. It was read as evidence of the depth of surviving clerical and feudal influence — which is to say, as confirmation that an interested class was holding the belief up after all, and that the class had not yet been sufficiently destroyed. The conclusion drawn from the failure was that the policy had not gone far enough.

This is the mechanism this paper exists to describe. A doctrine that cannot be refuted converts every refutation into evidence for itself, because the only available explanation for the failure of a correct prescription is that something obstructed it.

The third test: a class that had to be created

The steppe presented the doctrine with its hardest case and received its most catastrophic answer.

The Kazakh pastoral system was a coordination mechanism of considerable sophistication. Herds moved across seasonal pastures on routes fixed by long practice, timed to grass and water, sustaining a population on land that could not have carried a tenth as many people under settled cultivation. It was not primitive and it was not subsistence; it produced a marketable surplus, supported a stratified society, and had done so for centuries.

The doctrine had no category for it. Its stages required a peasantry — a settled cultivator, tied to a plot, exploited by a rural proprietor, to be freed by collectivisation. On the steppe there was no plot, no rent, no landlord in the required sense and no village. So all three had to be produced. A rural exploiter class was defined and filled: the *bai*, whose herds were confiscated from 1928. And a peasantry was manufactured out of nomads, by forcible sedentarisation, at speed, from about 1929.

What that meant operationally was the abolition of the coordination. The herds were collectivised and concentrated; the seasonal movement stopped; the animals had no route to winter pasture. The companion study to this one gives the arithmetic, and this paper reproduces it at one remove and flags that it has not verified the figures independently: a herd that had already been destroyed once in the upheavals of 1916–21 and had rebuilt itself, left alone, from 6.2 million head in 1921 to 40.5 million by 1928, was destroyed a second time within a few years — this time by policy.

The famine that followed killed on the order of a million and a half people, something approaching two-fifths of the Kazakh population, with very large numbers fleeing to China and to neighbouring republics. The mortality estimates are contested and are themselves a live political question; they should always be given as a range with sources named.

Note the structure, because it is the same as the *hujum*'s and it is why the two belong in one paper. The theory required a category. The category was absent. The category was produced by force. The production destroyed the mechanism that had been keeping the population alive. And the resulting catastrophe was attributed to *bai* sabotage, to wrecking, to the slaughtering of livestock by class enemies — which is to say, once again, to persons obstructing a correct policy.

Nobody concluded that the stages might not be universal.

The count

And then, in January 1937, the state built an instrument capable of testing its central prediction about belief, and ran it.

The all-union census of 6 January 1937 was the first since 1926. Its questionnaire carried fourteen items. The fifth was religion, and it had appeared in no previous Soviet census; it was inserted on Stalin's personal instruction, framed as a question about present conviction rather than inherited affiliation. A dictionary of religions and sects was prepared in advance for the enumerators. The state that had spent twenty years abolishing the institutions of religion asked its population, one by one, whether it still believed.

The conditions under which that question was answered need stating plainly, because they bear on how the answer should be read. It was the beginning of the Great Terror. In a great many villages the priest or the mullah had already been arrested. Rumours circulated that those who registered as believers would be exiled and their children expelled from school. Every incentive available to an ordinary person pointed toward saying no.

55,277,049 people said yes — 56.7 per cent of everyone over the age of sixteen who answered the question at all.

The total population came in at about 162 million. Stalin had told the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934 that the population at the end of 1933 stood at 168 million, and projections for 1937 had run to 170 million and above. The gap was roughly eight million people, and the demographer M. V. Kurman's internal report attributed it to unrecorded deaths, migration and double-counting in 1926 — which is to say, in part, to the famines.

The census was annulled within days. The resolution held that it had been conducted incorrectly and unprofessionally and con-

stituted a serious violation of the basic foundations of statistical science. The party journal *Bolshevik* wrote that the results had been corrupted by despicable enemies of the people, Trotskyist spies and traitors to the homeland who had infiltrated the central statistical administration. Ivan Kraval, who headed that administration, was arrested and shot in September 1937. Olimpii Kvitkin, who had led the census operation, was arrested and died in custody. Kurman and others were shot or sent to camps. Officials were dismissed and in many cases executed across the republics, with Ukraine and Kazakhstan — the two territories the missing eight million had mostly come from — hit hardest.

A replacement census was run in 1939. The question on religion was removed from the form entirely. The occupational category "priest" was replaced with "servitor of a cult." The published total was 170,557,000, which is the figure Stalin had given.

Stand back from that sequence, because it is the paper's whole argument compressed into twenty-six months.

A theory made a falsifiable prediction: that religion is an effect of material conditions and will dissolve when they change. A state acting on that theory spent twenty years changing the conditions and abolishing the institutions. The same state then built a first-class statistical instrument, inserted the decisive question at the leader's own initiative, and ran the test on a hundred million people. The instrument returned a refutation: after two decades, under terror, with every incentive to lie, a clear majority of adults declared themselves believers.

The refutation was reclassified as an **error of method**. The people who produced it were prosecuted for **incompetence**. And the question was struck from the next instrument, so that it could not be asked again.

That is not censorship, and it is worth being precise about the difference. Censorship concedes that a fact is a fact and forbids its circulation. What was done here was to rule that the count had not been a count. The state did not suppress a true number;

it declared that the number was not a number, punished its producers as technicians who had failed at their trade, and removed the instrument that had generated it. And the significant thing about the 1939 replacement is not that its total was falsified — that is ordinary — but that the *question was deleted*. The apparatus was rebuilt so that the refuting observation was no longer capable of being made.

VII

Why the bill is presented to a person

Four episodes, one operation. It is worth stating the mechanism in general terms because it is not peculiar to this state and the whole point of a framework is portability.

A governing group rules under a doctrine. It owns that doctrine whether or not it privately believes it, because having claimed the right to rule on the doctrine's terms it must be seen to be conforming to them — this is the commitment trap, and it binds the cynic exactly as tightly as the believer. So sincerity is not the variable and cannot be. What varies is the doctrine's grammar: whether it is held as a generalisation that experience can correct, or as a demonstrated law that experience cannot touch.

A revisable doctrine has somewhere to put a failure. The claim was too strong, or the case is exceptional, or the timetable was optimistic. The failure is absorbed by the doctrine itself, which becomes slightly smaller and slightly truer, and the transaction costs a policy paper. This is why an order with a revisable doctrine is comparatively cheap to hold: it can concede.

An unrevisable doctrine has nowhere to put a failure. To concede that the law does not fit the world is to concede that it was not a law, which is to concede that the right to rule under it was never good. So the failure has to be located somewhere else, and there are only two candidates. Either the prescription was not applied thoroughly enough — in which case the answer is more of it — or somebody obstructed it.

And that is why the cost lands specifically on persons. An epistemic problem has been converted into a personnel problem. If the law is correct and the outcome is wrong, then some-

where between the law and the outcome there is a human being who failed or betrayed. The apparatus required to find that human being has no natural stopping point, because the supply of failures is generated by the mismatch between the doctrine and the world, and the mismatch is permanent.

Every episode above returns the same answer. The women who reveiled were victims of surviving feudal influence, meaning that somebody was still exerting it. The livestock died because *bai* were slaughtering them. The census came back low because statisticians were wreckers and spies. And the same operation reached the men at the top of the native administration: Fayzulla Khojaev, who had proposed the creation of Uzbekistan, was shot in March 1938 after confessing that he had opposed it — a charge whose content is that he had held positions on the constitution and the economy of the republic he administered. The census and Khojaev are the same instrument applied at two levels. A result that contradicts the doctrine is redescribed as a defect in the person who produced it.

This is where the companion study's proposed revision needs adjusting, and the adjustment is small but load-bearing. That study concluded that the cost of holding a conquest is set by what the conqueror has promised. That is true of this case and it fails as a general rule, because the volume of promise does not track the cost. Britain promised trusteeship, the rule of law and eventual self-government under Article 22 of the League Covenant, in language every bit as expansive, and required no annulled census and no shooting of its own statisticians. What separates the cases is what that study itself identified and then demoted to a corollary: **it is not the size of the promise but its revisability**. Britain could concede failure — a commission of enquiry, a white paper, a shifted timetable, *not yet ready* — and each concession cost a document. The Soviet promise was held as a demonstrated law, so conceding failure would have conceded that the law was not demonstrated, and the cost had to be absorbed somewhere in the machinery instead.

The general statement is this. **Where a governing claim cannot be revised, the cost of its failures is not saved; it is transferred out of the doctrine and into the people running the apparatus, because the only remaining explanation for a correct policy producing a wrong result is that somebody obstructed it.**

VIII

The other ledger, which is the strongest evidence for all of this

The account so far is one-sided and the other side is not small.

A population that was almost entirely illiterate in 1917 was almost entirely literate within two generations. Universities, academies of sciences, research institutes, publishing houses and libraries were built where none had existed. Hospitals and clinics were built and staffed; infant mortality fell heavily and life expectancy rose across the Soviet decades. Women were educated, employed, and admitted to professions from which the previous order had excluded them absolutely — not through the *hujum*, which failed, but through schools and workplaces, which did not. Native-language publishing was created from nothing. A native professional and administrative class was trained at real expense.

No European colonial power did anything remotely comparable for any territory it held. The comparison is not close and no honest account can leave it out.

And here is the thing that makes this section the strongest evidence in the paper rather than a concession that weakens it.

Where the doctrine's prediction happened to be true, the programme worked spectacularly. The theory held that ordinary people, given the chance, want to read; that they want their children not to die of preventable disease; that a peasantry excluded from learning by cost and by an educational monopoly will take education if it is offered free. Those predictions were correct. They had, in fact, been arrived at the way a tested doctrine is arrived at — from the observed record of what happens

when schooling and medicine are extended — and where the programme rested on them, the machinery delivered results at a scale that shames every colonial administration in this collection.

Where the prediction was wrong, the programme failed — and the failure could not be learned from, so it was repeated. The theory of religion as a superstructural reflex was not a generalisation from any observed record; it was deduced from a first principle. It was wrong about what belief is, wrong about where it is stored, and wrong about what happens when you attack it. Every encounter with the evidence produced a refutation, and every refutation was reclassified.

That contrast disposes of the two easy explanations at once. It was not cruelty, because the same administration built the clinics. It was not incompetence, because the same administration ran a first-class statistical service and a literacy campaign that worked. It was that one part of the doctrine had been arrived at in a way that permitted correction and one part had not — and the part that had not was the part that governed how the state understood the people it was governing.

IX

What this does and does not claim

The distinction this paper turns on is not between good doctrines and bad ones, and it is not between the West and anywhere else.

It does not claim that orders with revisable doctrines are just. They contain grievous injustice, sustained for generations, and several of them appear elsewhere in this collection with the arithmetic set out. Self-correction is a capacity, not an achievement, and a capacity can go unused for a century.

It does not claim that such orders are safe from the temptation. A doctrine distilled from experience can harden into a creed, and when it does the same mechanism runs: failures stop being read as bugs and start being read as sabotage, and the apparatus for finding the saboteur begins to grow. Nothing about a constitutional pedigree immunises a claim against being held as a revelation.

And it does not claim that the tested doctrine is true and the revealed one false the way a fact is true. The distinction is between two relationships to one's own possible error — the relationship that can learn and the relationship that can only defend. That line does not run between peoples or between sides. It runs through the way any conviction is held, and it is available to be crossed in either direction by anyone who governs by a doctrine, which is everyone.

The one thing this paper would ask a reader to carry out of it is a diagnostic rather than a verdict, and it is small enough to use.

When a measurement comes back wrong, watch what is done to the people who took it. If the number is disputed, the

instrument is examined, the method is argued about and the measurers keep their positions, the doctrine in force is being held as a generalisation, whatever its content and whatever its rhetoric. If the measurers are removed and the question is struck from the next form, the doctrine is being held as a revelation, whatever its content and whatever its rhetoric.

In January 1937 fifty-five million people were asked a question and answered it honestly at considerable personal risk. The men who wrote the answer down were shot for incompetence, and the question was not asked again.

A note on sources

Quoted directly and in the public domain: Marx's passage on religion from the introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (written 1843, published 1844), given here in the standard English translation; a reader relying on its exact wording should specify the edition, since renderings differ in small particulars. Lenin's *Socialism and Religion* (1905) is characterised rather than quoted.

On the surrogate proletariat: Gregory J. Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929* (Princeton, 1974). The reconstruction of the Bolshevik reasoning given above follows the summary of Massell's argument in the publisher's and reviewers' descriptions of the book, which this paper has read rather than the book itself. That is a real limitation, because the argument's central deductive claim rests on Massell's reading of the internal reasoning, and anyone building further on this section should read him directly.

On the *hujum*: the launch on 8 March 1927 by the party's women's department, the meaning of the word, the bonfires at Tashkent, Samarkand and Andijan, the party's figure of over a hundred thousand unveiled within months, the murders by husbands and husbands' families, the incident in which a hundred of a hundred and seventy women reveiled after a rape by party members, and the absence of any formal ban, are drawn from the scholarly and teaching literature summarising Marianne Kamp's *The New Woman in Uzbekistan* (2006), Douglas Northrop's *Veiled Empire* (2004) and Adeeb Khalid's work. Neither Kamp nor Northrop has been read directly here. The figure of roughly two and a half thousand deaths is taken from that secondary summarisation and from the companion study in this

collection; it is an order of magnitude and not a total, and the attribution of the violence — whether principally a response to Soviet policy or an expression of conflicts internal to Uzbek society — is expressly contested in the literature.

On the nationalisation of the endowments: Beatrice Penati, "On the Local Origins of the Soviet Attack on 'Religious' Waqf in the Uzbek SSR (1927)," *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, cited here from its published abstract for the finding that the decision was driven substantially by provincial officials competing to demonstrate their reliability.

On the steppe: the herd figures of 6.2 million head in 1921 and 40.5 million in 1928, and the second destruction thereafter, are reproduced at one remove from the companion study *Russian and Soviet Turkestan* in this collection and have not been independently verified here. The famine mortality is given as an order of magnitude; the estimates are contested, the counting is itself a live political question in Kazakhstan and in Russia, and any study resting weight on a figure should give a range with its sources named. Sarah Cameron's *The Hungry Steppe* (2018) is the standard treatment.

On the census of January 1937: the date, the fourteen-item questionnaire, Stalin's personal insertion of the religion question, the figure of 55,277,049 believers representing 56.7 per cent of those over sixteen who answered, the total of about 162 million against Stalin's publicly stated 168 million for 1933, Kurman's internal report on the shortfall, the annulment on the ground that the census had been conducted incorrectly and unprofessionally in serious violation of the basic foundations of statistical science, the *Bolshevik* article on enemies of the people and Trotskyist spies, the arrest and execution of Ivan Kraval in September 1937, the death of Olimpii Kvitkin in custody, the punishment of Kurman and other statisticians, and the removal of the religion question and the redesignation of "priest" as "servitor of a cult" in the 1939 replacement census with its published total of 170,557,000 — are drawn from the

reference and journalistic literature summarising the archival work of Iu. A. Poliakov, V. B. Zhiromskaya and others, from Catherine Merridale's "The 1937 Census and the Limits of Stalinist Rule" (*Historical Journal*, 1996), from Felix Corley's "Believers' Responses to the 1937 and 1939 Soviet Censuses" (*Religion, State and Society*, 1994), and from Mark Harrison's chapter on the two censuses. The wording of the annulment resolution is given here from an English rendering in the press and should be checked against the Russian text before it is quoted in any further work; the substance of the charge — a defect of statistical method rather than a political offence — is consistent across all the sources consulted and is what the argument rests on.

Fayzulla Khojaev's execution in March 1938 and the content of the charges against him are taken from the companion study in this collection.

Two general cautions. This paper has worked substantially through the secondary and reference literature rather than through the monographs it names, and has said so at each point where that matters. And it touches, throughout, questions on which the successor states, the Russian Federation and several scholarly traditions hold present positions — on the famine and whether it constituted genocide, on whether the Soviet period is properly described as colonial, and on the assessment of the period as a whole. Where the argument bears on any of those, the competing readings are reported as each side states them and are not adjudicated here.